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ABSTRACT

This report, given at a special meeting on children's literature held in Tehran, presents an examination of titles from foreign languages which have been recommended for acquisition and use in elementary school libraries serving kindergarten through grade six in the United States and which are commercially available for purchase. The report is based on two lists of titles of imaginative literature--fiction for grades four through six and easy reading for preschool through third grade--recommended in "The Elementary School Library Collection: A Guide to Books and Other Media" and shows that although a wide variety of quality publishers in the United States have issued foreign children's stories, two-thirds have only one or two recommended titles in print, mostly from European languages. (JM)

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CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE SERVICE OF INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING AND PEACEFUL CO-OPERATION

ORGANIZED BY THE
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15-21 MAY 1975 , TEHRAN

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Children's Literature in the Service of

International Understanding and Peaceful Co-operation

Tehran, 15-21 May 1972

Mary Virginia Gaver (x)

U.S.A.

This brief paper is intended to present an analysis of titles translated from foreign languages which have been recommended for acquisition and use in elementary school libraries serving kindergarten through grade six in the United States and which are commercially available for purchase (that is, in print). It is based upon the listing of those titles of imaginative literature in the two classes of Fiction (for grades 4-6) and the so-called Easy Class (pre-school through third grade), recommended in The Elementary School Library Collection: A Guide to Books and Other Media, edited by Phyllis Van Orden. 9th ed. (New Brunswick, NJ Bro-Dart Foundation, 1974. $24.95). This publication begun in 1965, has been issued annually since that date (with irregular supplements) and is at the present time widely used as a guide to purchase by many elementary school libraries throughout the country. Its scope includes approximately 10,000 citations (titles) of which three-fourths are books and one-fourth are filmstrips, recordings, transparencies and other forms of non-print; of the total, 2695 titles fall in the Fiction and Easy classes.

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(x) - The author is professor Emeritus, Rutgers the State University of New Jersey; and Editor, The Elementary School Library Collecttion, Editions one through 8. The Bro-Dart Foundation, 1965-1973

It is assumed that a look at the translated titles in the two classes of stories in this bibliography will provide some insight into works by non-English speaking authors provided in many elementary schools through their libraries. In recent years such factors as the Frankfurt Book Fair, IBBY, the Andersen Medal, and other similar activities of publishers and librarians, have resulted in a steadily increasing interchange of publicatinn between different countries; this has not only been true of publication of authrors for adult readers but has also been specially so for authors and illustrators of books for children. It has of course been true for generations of interchange among English-speaking countries - Great Britain, Australia, Canada, and the United States - and in fact, fiction originally published in England makes up a sizable proportion of the titles provided for children in the United States. As authors for children increase their productivity in Australia and Canada, their works are also being made available to children in this country. These have, however, been excluded from the present analysis. It should also be pointed out that this study further excludes (for reasons of time only) the great wealth of titles in the Dewey classed of 290, 398, and 883, most of which are essentially re-tellings of traditional lore and literary epic, from a great variety of cultures.

Table I (Appendix) shows the number of authors and titles included in the Fiction and Easy classes by language in the Elementary school Library Collection, 9th Edition (hereafter referred to as ESLC #9).

Works of translated authors represented in ESLC #9.- Study of the data on a purely quantitative basis indicates that this bibliography recommends for elementary school children stories from twelve different non-English speaking countries, by 66 different authors (three are duplicated in the two classes) and115 different titles. It may not be particularly surprising, though it is worthy of note, that all but one author are European in origin (counting the Russian land-mass as European); one Japanese author represents the great majority of countries outside of Europe. Another obvious characteristic of children's Literature in the United States (related to country of origin) is the wealth of authors of foreign origin, in many cases first generation Americans, who write in English and whose original publication is in the United States. A survey of titles listed in ESLC #9 reveals such noted examples as Dhan Gopal Mukerji, the d'Aulaires, Taro Yashima, Kate Seredy, Roger Duvoisin and Louise Fatio, Meindert DeJong, Yashiko Uchida, Erick Haugaard, Kyra Petrovskaya Wayne, Sulamith Ish-Kishor and many others, whose names bear witness to their foreign origin but who are either bi-lingual or write in English and are first published in the U.S. The writer believes that Isaac Baashevis Singer is the only citizen of the United States who writes for children in a foreign language (Yiddish) and whose works therefore must be translated. Another aspect to be noted is the retelling of

such standard authors as Baron Munchausen, Miguel de Cervantes, and de la Motte-Fouque, whose works have been retold (but not directly translated) in terms enjoyable by children below twelve years of age.

Of particular concern here is that these titles represent less than five percent (.38%) of the total number of stories recommended in both Fiction and Easy Classes for children's reading or story-telling. (x)

The predominance of Scandinavian authors in this list is perhaps due not only to writing and publishing activities in Denemark, Sweden, Finland and Norway but also to the close relationship between publishers and librarians of the U.S. and Scandinavia extending over at least fifty years, if not longer.

Publishers and producers.- As to who publishes or produces titles which have been recommended for children in ESLC #9, it was found that 41 different publishers/producers are represented here by 115 different titles. A few are relatively new and still small houses, such as Four Winds, J.P O'Hara, Delacorte, Criterion, Pantheon; all but two however could definitely be classified as "quality" houses - firms whose name one connotes with quality publication, as a rule, both in format and in content. Of the 41, 34 are United States publishers, one is Danish (Rhensted), and six are producersfwho issue

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(x) - No comparison has been made with the Children's Catalog (12th edition N.Y. HW Wilson Company, 1971 + suppl.) but it is doubtful that there would be much difference between the two. Whethere the proportion is low or high is a subjective matter, and depends on what is available from publishers.

only recordings or sound filmstrips. One of the publishers (Viking) issues both books and audiovisual materials based on their own book publications. The range in number of titles issued is one to thirteen; thirteen firms have published three or more titles of translated authors. These are: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc. (13); The Viking press, Inc. (10); Harper & Row Publishers (8); Delacorte press (Dell) (7); Charles Scribner's Sons (7), Henry Z. Walck, Inc. (5); Coward, McCann & Georghegan, Inc (5); Caedmon Records, Inc. (4); Macmillan, Inc. (4); World publishing Company, Inc. (now Collins/World) (3); pantheon Books, Inc. (3); William Morrow & Co., Inc. (3); Lothrop Lee & Shepard Company (3).

The predominance of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich on this list is due to the work of their former Editor of Juvenile Books, Margaret McElderry, now with Athenuem publishers and recipient of the Constance Lindsay Skinner Award for 1975, given by the Womens' National Book Association for distinguished contribution by a woman to the world of books. A telephone interview with Miss McElderry yielded the following comments which may be of interest to other publishers and editors:

> I have often asked myself why I was able to secure so many authors from foreign countries for our list. My parents were both Irish and I visited there frequently as a child. I was always enormously interested in other countries and wanted to travel. I was in London during the second World War with the U.S. office of War Information and there I met and was involved with people from many countries.
>
> Then after the War when I came back to New York, there was

that terrific show at the Morgan Library of what had happened in publishing during the war. Fritz Eichenberg and Karl Kdp worked on that show and I met them there, especially Fritz. Then one day at the Bonniers Bookstore I met Hans Fischer and from that came the publication of his picture book - the first one on our list from a foreign country. Then Margot Benary-Isbert's stories were sent to me. After that I travelled to Scandinavia at a time when Doris Patee was the only other editor who had been there. And it went on from there.....

More on this author's point of view about translated books may be found in an article on "The hazards of translation" (Horn Book Magazine 49: 565-9, December 1973). A tribute to another remarkable editor of books for children who made an unusual contribution to the production of translated titles is hidden, in the figures for Viking and World publishing Co., which were served for years by Velma Varner, now deceased, who was responsible for most of the titles credited to these two publishers in this study.

Criteria for selection.- ESLC #9 includes an extensive statement of "Selection Policy" which has guided the ten librarieans who are primarily responsible for the selection of titles recommended therein. Pertinent selections from that statement are quoted here:

> The elementary school media center must provide as broad a selection of excellent materials, covering both fact and fiction, as current publishing and producing makes possible... We have kept in mind the fact that the group of readers for whom this list is provided will broadly read more and learn through

all media more voraciously at this period, especially in the middle grades, than at any other time in their lives. We have therefore tried to select those titles of immediate appeal, interest, and special value. On specific topics of wide appeal, we have tried to select books of many levels of difficulty... One overriding concern has been to select works of fiction... that have social raality in modern life. (ESLC #9, p. xiv-xv)

Curriculum developments which have influenced selection for elementary school libraries include the following:

...continued emphasis on creativity, on early independent reading, on critical thinking and on reading about abstract ideals and concepts...continuation of focus on home and family life in the primary grades ...emphasis on city life to fit the change from a rural to an urban society...continuing attention to study of the United Nations of the world, newly developing countries...emphasis on reading materials which will enrich the child's literary heritage... (ESLC #9, p.xii-xii).

Thus it becomes clear that the selection of fiction for ESLC #9 should certainly include recommendatinn of a broad of titles from foreign languages and cultures, which will appeal to the interests and reading abilities of children in grades pre-school through six in the schools of the United States. Recommendations on these bases are made by a group of practicing elementary school librarians and two library educators, both specialists in children's literature and school libraries.

A special criterion used by these selectors in selecting special titles, in addition to those generally accepted in children's literature, should be identified as the determination of reading level by means of

the Fry Reading Graph (see p. vii-vii of ESLC #9). This does not mean, however, that titles are limited to a top sixth grade reading level; rather, titles which are found to be 8th or 9th grade reading level are scrutinized critically for their general appeal and usefulness to the top 6th grade reader for whom this bibliography is prepared.

Special characteristics of translated titles in ESLC #9.- Looking at the entire group of over one hundred titles which it is the assumption of this paper may be expected to be found in many elementary school libraries in the United States, it seems to the writer that they may be categorized as follows:

There is a sizable group of authors and titles which are generally recognized as "standard," or established authors of children's books, with world-wide reputations. These would include as their leader, of course, that most translated of all authors Hans Christian Andersen, as well as Carlo Collodi, Johanna Spyri, Astrid Lindgren, Tove Jansson, Maria Gripe, and Antoine de St. Exupery. The appearance of TV/film programs recently featuring stories by Collodi, Lindgren, and St. Exupery has increased their popularity among American children tremendously.

The other sizeable group of translated works is made up of stories by contemporary authors, primarily writing realistic stories. These are on universal themes, on topics of special interest to American children, or on events to which the foreign author can make a particular contribution (such as Bettina Hurlimann's William Tell and his Son). As a rule, also, stories which succeed in appealing to American children have the indefinable quality of identification - a

leading character with whom the child reader can easily emphahize. Stories about the second world War take an important place in this group - Ann Holm's North to Home; the stories of Margot Benary-Isbert; the Russian authors Uri Suhl, Prishvin, and Perovskaya; Hans Peter Richter's I was there; Zdenka Bezdekova's They called me Lenni; Jaap Ter Haar, Boris; Hanna Stephan's Quest. The two stories by the Greek author Aliki Zei are outstanding for their contribution in this area. Stories of high appeal to American children today are mystery or detective stories; among the translated stories of this type are Karin Ahckarsvaard's Robber ghost; Henry Winterfield's Detectives in Toga series; Birkeland's Lemonade Murder; Preussler's Satanic Mill; and Lindgren's Bill Bergson series. Astrid Lindgren's stories also seem to have a variety of appeals to American children:- the outrageous adventures of Pippe Longstocking and Emil in the soup tureen seem to have the same appeal as our cartoon character Dennis the Menace and her Seacrow Island is the prototype of an inviting family story of summer adventure. Realistic "problem stories" abound in our books from England but are less evident among translated authors. However Babbis Friis-Baastad's stories of physically and mentally handicapped children have been well received here, as attested by their publishing life of ten years. Adventure stories such as Hamre's Operation Arctic, poulsson's Blind Landing and Guillot's Grichka and the wolves also have an appeal for some American children, especially boys.

Two titles published within the past six months (and not yet included in ESLC) are interesting examples of stories with high potential appeal to American children. Cecil Bodker's The Leopard(tr. by

Gunnar Poulsen. Atheneum, 1975) won a Danish children's literature prize for its author. Set in Ethiopia, it tells of a small boy guarding the tribe's cattle when a newborn calf is stolen by a leopard; the story follows the boy's arduous and courageous struggles to get someone to help him catch and kill the leopard and thus avenge his honor. It is exciting, fast-moving, with interesting characters, and an unusual setting and can be read by the average sixth grade reader in the U.S. Another recent publication by Kerstin Thorvall, And Leffe was instead of a Father (tr. by Francine Lee Mirro. Bradbury, 1974) is almost like a Norwegian version of a recent controversial American story Klein's Mom, the Wolf Man and Me. Leffe like the Wolf Man lives with the family "without benefit of clergy". Unlike the American story, however, Magnus' family life is troubled and he doesn't want his friends to know about Leffe's past history as a convict. Leffe eventually learns that adults are sometimes like kids, only the kids are smartest. This story should be especially welcomed in urban American schools as a realistic story of present-day probblems with the added benefit that it can be read by third grades (at the upper primary grade level).

In selecting stories of translated authors, the eleventary school librarian is obliged to consider not only the potential appeal to American children but also the success of the authro in portraying the life of a foreign country to American children. Some of the titles in ESLC portray a now-outmoded way of life, however, which may be misinterpreted by younger readers especialliy. Just as the American Hans Brinker of the Silver Skates by Mary Mapes Dodge has been

criticized for a long time as depicting a Holland which never existed, so Maj Lindman and Elsa Beskow's stories depict a now-almost-vanished Sweden which may not be read as historical by the American child reader. Authentic informational books which perform this function are seriously needed in the United States, particularly about the newly developing countries. Among the stories in this bibliography which are successful in doing this can be noted not only the stories already mentioned but also Gunnel Linde's White Stone; Pipaluk Freuchen's Eskimo Boy; van Iterson's Pulga and Village of Outcasts; Baudoy's Old one-Two; Hans Peterson's Erick and the Christmas Horse; and Jan Loof's My Grandpa is a pirate. The role of the trnalator.- The role of the translaor is of course exceedingly important in children's as in adult books, not only in interpreting authentically the culture and life of the country of origin but also in using the English language at a reading level that will be appropriate for the children who make up the book's potential American audience. In the past, publishers in the United States have produced many fine picture books (such as those by Selina Chonz and Alois Carigiet) which have met one need in the child's reading program - that for picture-books from which an adult reads to the Young child. At present, however, the demand is increasingly for stories that can be read independently by children in the primary grade levels, especially at the third-fourth grade level. The fact-stories produced jointly by Anna Riwkin-Brick and Astrid Lindgren represent one effort to meet this need, but the truth is that they are about children at the 3rd-4th grade level but are sixth grade in reading difficulty, that is, too difficult for most upper primary grade readers to read.

A special hazard in the selection of translated work, probably more of an obstacle in factual than in fictional works, is the avoidance of stereotyping and particularly of nationalistic elements. Experience of the writer as a consultant for Franklin Watts' in publication of their International Library Series (co-published with firms in England, France, Germany and Italy) has pointed out the difficulty of maintaining as a criterion a non-nationalistic, non-chauvinistic treatment. The fact that this series has received favorable reviews in almost all countries of publication indicates that it has been successful in issuing informational books which did not reflect a nationalistic point of view. Having said this, however, one is forced to recognize that this must be balanced, as Mary Orvig has pointed out, with the recognition that

> Children's books keep alive a sense of nationality. But they also keep alive a sense of humanity...they also describe faraway lands where unknown brothers live. They recognize the essential quality of their own race, but each of them is a messenger that goes beyond mountains and rivers...
>
> Mary Orvig, "Children's books in translation: Facts and beliefs," as quoted in Issues in children's book selection. R R Bowker Company, 1973, P. 185-6

Promotion of interest in translated books. The books represented in this analysis constitute a category of great significance for elementary school libraries, but it is obvious that at this time they still constitute a relatively small proportion of the total. For this reason, school librarians in this country should welcome the

Mildred Batchelder Award, established in 1968 to honor the former Executive Secretary of the American Library Association, which goes annually to an "American publisher for a children's book originally published in a foreign language in a foreign country and subsequently published in English in the United States." In 1975 this award went to Crown publishers for Linevski's An Old Tale carved out of Stone, translated by Maria Polushkin (see Polushkin in "A few words on translation" and Sawicki "The fate oftranslated children's books" Horn Book Magazine 50:256-9, 260-262, June 1974).

In 1974, in order to implement more effectively the underlying purpose of this Award, the Children's Service Division established a promotion program to encourage greater attention to translated books at the local level - in public and school libraries - by designating ten libraries to announce and celebrate the award each year. Among the ten chosen in 1975 was the orchard Raad School, Montgomery Township, Skillman, NJ of which Mrs. Carolyn Royce is Librarian. All the sixth graders read the story by Linevski and a variety of programs within the school were carried out. In addition, the children prepared and filmed a video-tape program on the book. When the librarian requested the Director of the Woodrow Wilson School of International Studies at nearby Princeton University to display a poster about the program made by the children, the Director invitdd her and the children to visit the School and gave them a conducted tour of the beautiful building, designed by the noted architect Edward Durrell Stone. As a result of these activities a great deal of interest and knowledge on the part of ildren, faculty, and parents was stimulated and no doubt continuing

interest will be shown in other translated titles. This is only one small example of what can and should be done in schools and libraries to stimulate interest in literature from other countries.

Conclusion. - A wide variety of quality publishers in the United States have issued children's stories translated from foreign languages; two-thirds of the total of 41, however, have only one or two titles in print at present which have been selected for recommendation in ESEC #9. European languages constitute almost the sole source for such translations. Such titles make up a very small proportion of the total available for library purchase in the U.S.

In selecting stories for elementary school children, librarians can apply the usual criteria for identification of appropriate titles and editions. But quality of translation is an important added criterion. In the absence of alternate editions however (as in the case of editions of Andersen), the librarian has no alternative other than to select from what is available in terms of readership by American children.

Awards and meetings at the international level have been influential in stimulating, on the one hand, production and interchange of publications and, on the other hand, greater availability of these translated works for children through libraries. However, much can be done by librarians, teachers and parents to bring greater attention to the values, satisfaction and learning to be gained by including a large and more representative selection of translated works among the total collections made available to children, and by carrying out appropriate programs to bring greater public attention to them.

Children, like adults can learn much not only from actual travel but also from "armchair travel", by reading the translated works of foreign authors. As the Persian poet Sa'adi said hundreds of years ago:

> Of journeying the benefits are many: the freshness it bringeth to the heart, the seeing and hearing of marvelous things, the delight of beholding new cities, the meeting of unknown friends, and the learning of high manners.